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12 May 2004

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Iran: The Bani Tamim tribe in Iran; name of the chief; size and influence of the tribe in Iran; areas of concentration; whether the tribe has influence outside these areas; position of women in the tribe, especially with regard to leaving their husbands or obtaining a divorce; whether women are in danger of being killed for leaving or divorcing their husbands

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

The Bani Tamim constitute one of several Arab tribes residing in Iran (Director 6 May 2004; Iran Chamber Society 20 Apr. 2004). In correspondence with the Research Directorate on 6 May 2004, the Director of the Centre for Arab and Iranian Studies in London, UK, provided the following information.

Citing "harassment" against the Bani Tamim at the hands of the current regime in Iran as a reason for the tribe's increasingly low profile, the Director stated that there was currently a chief of the tribe, probably an elder tribesman, but he did not know his identity. The Director estimated that there could be as many as 200,000 members of Bani Tamim in Iran. Outside Iran, members of the tribe are found in large numbers in Iraq, as well as to a lesser degree in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar. Inside Iran, the tribe is almost exclusively concentrated in the southern Khuzestan province. The Director said that outside this area of Iran, the tribe had no influence and that in general it was a "dying tribe," with members generally ceasing to identify with the Bani Tamim as soon as they migrate to Iranian cities or abroad. In contrast, the Director stated that the Bani Kaab tribe is a strong and influential Arab tribe which has adapted and survived in urban settings.

With regard to the situation of women belonging to the tribe, the Director was of the opinion that their plight was "terrible," and was personally aware of three cases of women killed by a male relative for reasons of honour. The Director also reported that the suicide rate among women has been rising rapidly in recent years (sometimes taking the form of self-immolation). This can be partly explained, said the Director, by the enormous pressure felt by married women within the tribe, many of whom are allegedly "used" by their husbands. The Director went on to say that it would be "very difficult" for a woman to divorce or leave her husband, although a man does not face this challenge when he wishes to separate from his wife. According to the Director, by leaving her husband, a woman is making a statement that either her husband is "not man enough for her" or her love interests lie elsewhere; in either case, it is a severe insult for a Bani Tamim man and would automatically result in putting the woman's well being, and possibly her life, in danger. The Director claimed that this danger would be comparable to that experienced by a woman who had had

an affair and could therefore be the target of an "honour killing", a danger only possibly mitigated by the woman involved moving to an area of the country where she is not acquainted with anyone. Information corroborating the Director's statements could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Centre for Arab and Iranian Studies, London. 6 May 2004. Correspondence with the Director.

Iran Chamber Society. 20 April 2004. "Iranian Ethnic Groups."
<http://www.iranchamber.com/people/iranian_ethnic_groups.php> [Accessed 20 Apr. 2004]

Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: Al-Jazeera, Amnesty International (AI), BBC, The Economist, European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI), Freedom House, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Iran Daily, Tehran Globe, Tehran Times, United States Department of State, World News Connection (WNC)

Publications: *Atlas du peuple d'Orient*, *Encyclopedia of Islam*, *Ethnic Groups Worldwide*, *Iran After the Revolution*, *Iran - A Country Study*, *Iran - Lonely Planet*, *The Islamic Republic of Iran - Country Assessment*, *National Geographic*, *Regards sur la République islamique d'Iran*, *World Directory of Minorities*

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